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LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE.

FRANCE.

CURIOUS in the extreme, but in a measure venturesome, is the work of M. E. PRÉAUBERT, *La vie mode de mouvement, essai d'une théorie physique des phénomènes vitaux*. Life can no longer be regarded as a phenomenon which has a place absolutely apart from the regular chain of events of the world. Nor is it permissible even to say that it is incapable of being reduced to the facts of the antecedent sciences which furnish its conditions; and philosophical biologists refuse to be placed under any restraint in seeking its origin and explanation either by way of theory or experiment.

But where is the origin of life to be found? We have seen M. Le Dantec, who is a biologist by profession, seek its origin in chemistry. M. Préaubert, who is predominantly a physicist, seeks it in physics. For him, biology is a question of mechanics. Life is not a particular mode of chemical reactions, but predominantly a mode of motion; it has for its substratum not ponderable matter but the ether, and consequently is possessed of an intimate kinship with electricity and magnetism.

The albuminoid bodies, our author writes, are not life any more than iron is magnetism; they are simply substances which are *par excellence* fitted for being the vehicle of life. Life is something different; it is a motion of the mysterious ether. The vital movement, accordingly, is prior to the protoplasmic molecule. The beginnings of life may even be connected, and in all probability they must be connected, with the evolution of "globular lightning" so called, viz., with a vortex movement of a particular kind which

is susceptible of stability only in the midst of these albuminoid substances, in which the passage from the mineral state to the living unit is accomplished.

One cannot deny to M. Pr  aubert the merit of having supported his venturesome views by interesting arguments. He develops his thesis with great knowledge and conviction. Nevertheless objections to his position crowd forward. The author assumes at the very outset that "a dead body is not differently composed from a living body," which justifies his seeing in life a distinct property or energy introduced from without. But it is only too evident that this comparison of a dead body to a living body is founded upon appearance only, and that M. Pr  aubert becomes involved here in a false interpretation of morphological facts. I also criticise him for having quitted the path of possible explanation in order to enter that of impossible explanation. He neglects chemical phenomena, which border on biological phenomena, in order to pass at a bound to physical phenomena, whereas these last are connected with life only through the necessary mediation of the laws of chemistry which represent higher and more complex facts. We have here a fault of method, a fundamental error which vitiates the whole theory and leaves only its fragments standing.

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M. CYRILLE BLONDEAU shows in *L'Absolu et sa loi constitutive*, genuine literary talent and comprehensive erudition, together with great philosophical vigor. Possibly he expounds his doctrine in too diffuse a manner; his work might have gained by being reduced; and the composition as a whole would have been better, I think, had M. Blondeau advanced more rapidly to his final chapter, and had made this the central point of his demonstration and views.

The doctrine of M. Blondeau is well indicated by the title of his work. A fundamental opposition exists, according to him, between the point of view of sensibility and that of reason. There is no bond uniting the operations of the senses to those of the mind. If the data furnished by the senses are the materials of mind, they

must nevertheless not be conceived as principles or as truths. The senses give us relative results only; but science must give us the absolute. Things are only relations; but they are relations within the infinite. The contradictions inherent in things from the point of view of science are dissipated in the absolute, which is necessarily undetermined.

But how can the consideration of the absolute, in which man is thus submerged, be made fruitful? What is its "higher law"—the law by which we can descend again from the universal existence formed by all the relations between phenomena, to the phenomenal world itself, in order to pursue there the necessary consequences of the supreme principle? This law is formulated as follows: "The mutual relation of the constitutive elements of anything whatever is in inverse proportion to their relation to the environment containing them." Or: "The force which goes to make up a whole, viz., any object whatever, is the opposite of the force which makes of that object a part, that is, an element of some other object. We have here, as M. Blondeau himself says, a new expression of the old principle of Anaximenes that the order of nature is merely the equilibrium of contrary forces.

This law, the author asserts, is really a "higher" law because it is not subject to any particular limit, and it does not depend, as particular laws do, upon facts which cannot have existed in the past, or on such as can ever cease to exist in the future. It clearly implies the infinity of being, because in the case of every single thing there must necessarily exist external relations for keeping up the relative equilibrium of its elements. Undoubtedly, "it is not possible to comprehend" this absolute and thoroughly undetermined being, but "that of itself is reason,"—a conclusion which will not perfectly satisfy either the spiritualists or the idealists, or even the majority of metaphysicists, who are bent on finding the explicative reason of the world in mind rather than in the principles of universal mechanics, abstract and comprehensive as its formulæ may appear.

The last work of M. F. LE DANTEC, *L'Individualité et l'erreur individualiste*, is in the main a polemical composition. The author

recalls his conception of individuality, protests against the erroneous interpretation of the determinist doctrine by certain Catholic authors, and combats the thesis of the late E. D. Cope, according to which consciousness, instead of being an epiphenomenon, preceded the organism and was the *primum mobile* of all organic structure. I hold the same theory of the ego approximately as M. Le Dantec does. At least I am of opinion that it is only by beginning with determinism that we can hope to lay the foundations of a stable psychology. What philosophical biologists should start with is not in my opinion the existence of a spiritual substance or of a hypothetical virtuality, but the possible and probable signification of consciousness and mind in the economy of the universe. The best informed philosophy is not bound to prohibit flights of induction, provided its conjectures are always submitted to tried methods of experience, which alone can furnish solid data.

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M. GEORGES FULLIQUET in an *Essai sur l'obligation morale* takes up questions which have been treated a hundred times, and re-thinks them after his fashion,—a salutary exercise for a young philosopher,—but in the present case, as it seems to me, unproductive of new views. For M. Fulliquet obligation is not a bond created by life, but a power (or an experience) imposed by God. Owing to moral obligation, there is something unchangeable in nature, despite the fact that this unchangeable something does not depend upon man. M. Fulliquet offers us, accordingly, a new formula for the doctrine of innate ideas,—a doctrine which appears correct or incorrect, according as the facts of consciousness which are declared innate are germs which are destined to evolve in the course of life or are products which require neither time nor effort to reach their maturity; in other words, according as experience dispenses with mystery or as mystery invades experience.

M. F. PILLON publishes *La philosophie de Charles Secrétan*. It is a good critical work on the doctrines of this philosopher, who certainly possessed some genuine merit as a thinker, but who in my opinion was not of sufficient importance to found a school.

The metaphysics of M. Secrétan, says M. Pillon, is merely a philosophical theory of the great Christian dogmas, and his ethics a philosophical theory of Christian morals.

M. GASTON MILHAUD, in *Le rationnel*, claims creative power and originality for the human species, but he seems to understand by these words two distinct things, which are not equally clear. In his treatment of the Bacons and the Comtes he champions the rights of rational science, which must not suffer itself to be enthralled by the notions of sensible reality,—the right, namely, of constructing hypotheses or “rational laws” which serve to embrace in brief and simple formulæ the greatest possible number of facts. Science, in fact, is merely a way of thinking the world, and it is permissible to think it in various manners, in other words, in the manner which suits us best. But the value of our hypotheses always finds its conditions in the facts. It requires a concordance between *ideas* and *things*, and I do not understand very well the privilege which M. Milhaud claims for the Idea, which according to him is not determined either by immanent (subjective) solicitations or by the external (objective) solicitations which suggest it. Such a privilege supposes a doctrine of the human soul to which the author has not succeeded in giving a sufficiently precise and personal expression.

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The study of M. HENRI LICHTENBERGER, *La philosophie de Nietzsche*, is the first to appear in France upon this philosopher, and will certainly find numerous readers. M. Lichtenberger has sought rather to tell the story of Nietzsche than to criticise him, and I think he has done well. Nietzsche has not a philosophy exactly; he is an *individual*, a psychological curiosity,—or, shall we add, a diseased personality? It would certainly be ungenerous to discredit absolutely the work of this thinker because he ultimately succumbed to insanity, and I do not mingle the least animadversion with my judgment of this unfortunate writer. I cannot refrain, however, from remarking with M. Lichtenberger that sensibility constantly determined and overruled the intellect in the case of Nietzsche; that his philosophy proceeded originally from senti-

ment, and that his reason varied with the disorders of his physiological health in a far higher measure than is ordinarily the case with sound and robust writers. Besides, Nietzsche is predominantly an artist, a man of emotion rather than of intellect. He constructed his theories according to the passions of the moment, and in order to justify or to allay those passions, without ever confining himself to an attentive or impartial observation of things. He is at once impulsive and logical, has a systematic bent but a disordered brain. The poet that he is, and the thinker that he is, conflict with rather than support each other. His most correct views seem disordered or chimerical. He exaggerates even the truth itself. His pages are filled with violence and bitterness, with *naïveté* and pride, with unbounded skepticism and infantile cruelty. In reading him, I obtain a higher regard for simple people and am surprised to find myself blessing "philistine" honesty.

If the work of M. ALEXIS BERTRAND, *L'Enseignement intégral*, addresses itself mainly to French readers, it will nevertheless be interesting to a large circle of readers. M. Bertrand proposes the organisation of a secondary system of instruction designed for the masses of the people, and in continuation of the primary school a system of instruction so organised and so conducted that it would soon grow general and replace the classical system of our lyceums. In a word, it is the substitution of the modern for the ancient type. M. Bertrand appeals to the authority of two great names,—that of Descartes and that of Comte. The pedagogical work of the former is in general unknown, while that of the latter is misconstrued and disfigured at pleasure.

It would be ungrateful not to praise the effort of M. Bertrand. Eighteen years ago I defended with energy a project which was quite similar to this, and which was based upon the same thought. I had in mind the people of our towns and country districts whom I called "the bourgeoisie of manual labor." The only point on which I would criticise the author is that he has endeavored rather to crowd erudition into his work than to analyse carefully the social conditions which justify it; I could also have wished less literary elegance and more force. But we should remember that M. Ber-

trand is addressing in the first instance the university world where he will encounter numerous adversaries before acquiring allies.

With M. PAULIN MALAPERT, *Les éléments du caractère et leurs lois de combinaison*, we take up again the question of ethology which has been much studied of late years. It cannot be said that the science of character has as yet found assured principles in psychological physiology. It has simply been better formulated and been pushed to greater depths, which is in itself much. M. Malapert does not flatter himself with having advanced a definitive theory. He limits himself to the work of criticising and recasting. He takes exception to M. Pérez and M. Paulhan for having exhibited rather the manifestations and the forms of character than its foundations; he criticises M. Ribot and M. Fouillée for having simplified things too much. M. Ribot, according to him, has failed to recognise that there exists a *voluntary* as well as an *intellectual* class; he was wrong (but I do not think so) in not having seen in intelligence a secondary factor only. In accord upon this point with M. Fouillée, M. Malapert nevertheless criticises the latter for having adhered to the rigorous classification of Bain (*emotional, intellectual, volitional*) and with not having brought his classification into relation with that of temperaments, upon which it pretends to be founded. The classification which he proposes is a mixture of that of M. Ribot and that of M. Fouillée. In fine, M. Malapert establishes six principal classes which are purely abstract (viz., *apathiques, affectifs, intellectuels, actifs, tempérés, volontaires*); and these classes express simply the domination of this or that general psychical function without predetermining the aspects which that function covers in a reality. The sub-classes or kinds would then be obtained by intermixture, and the reciprocal influence of the principal traits. Thus the *apathiques*, for example, are sub-divided into *apathiques purs*, *apathiques intelligents*, and *apathiques actifs*.

Practically these six classes are acceptable, but theoretically are not so well justified. The author, in my opinion, has done wrong in placing upon the same plane classificatory characters whose physiological or psychological value is quite unequal and which are not sufficiently distinct. I shall say no more upon this

point to-day (I refer the reader to what I wrote upon it in *The Monist* for April, 1892, July, 1894, and for April and October, 1896). It remains to be said that M. Malapert believes that character can be a personal creation, and that free will is a force capable of affecting the transformation of the individual—an assertion which is correct or incorrect according to the qualities of character which we have in mind, or according to the “reactions” which we consider.

I shall simply mention my own book, *Les croyances de demain*,¹ and along with it the following works : by M. MAURICE PUJO, *La Crise morale* (Perrin, publisher); by M. ANDRÉ LEFÈVRE, *L'histoire, entretiens sur l'évolution historique* (Schleicher, publ.); by M. SIGHELE, *Psychologie des Sectes* (Giard & Brière, publ.); by M. A. VACCARO, *Les bases sociologiques du droit et de l'état* (*ibid.*); by M. SOULIER, *Des origines et de l'état social de la nation française* (*ibid.*); by M. DOBRESIO, *L'Évolution du droit* (*ibid.*) and finally the work of M. A. ESPINAS, *Les origines de la technologie* (F. Alcan, publ.), a very learned work on which I should have liked to say something, and to which I shall probably have occasion to return.

L. ARRÉAT.

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¹All works previously mentioned are published by Félix Alcan.